Zoology and the Media

A forum of the Royal Zoological Society of NSW

Edited by Daniel Lunney, Alison Matthews and Peter Wilson

Preface

On 18 October 1997 the Royal Zoological Society of NSW hosted a forum to discuss the relationship between zoology and the media. It was a most successful day, great stories, new insights and enthusiastic questions. As a forum awaiting publication, it joined the queue behind *Ethics, Money and Politics* (1998); *Is the Biodiversity Tail Wagging the Zoological Dog* (1998); and *The Other 99%. The conservation and biodiversity of invertebrates* (1999). Financial constraints within the RZS in 1999, especially following such a busy publication schedule, meant only a meagre publication program in 2000 and 2001, with priority going to the regular journal, the *Australian Zoologist,* and then those publications for which external funding support had been found, *A Symposium on the Dingo* (2001), *A Zoological Revolution* (2002), and *Managing the Grey-headed Flying-fox as a threatened species* (2002). We did not despair, and resolved to publish the forum within the pages of a regular *Australian Zoologist*.

A major paper presented on the day by Ian Plimer of the University of Melbourne, *Science vs creationism: the legal lessons learnt,* is not included here. A legal decision, subsequent to his presentation, meant that he had to withdraw his paper. This is a loss, but there was nothing that the RZS could do.

The only odd thing about reading these papers now is that some of the reference points are dated, e.g. the forthcoming Sydney Olympics. This does not distract from the accounts, the personal views or the drama of the individual stories. They remain as fresh as the moment they were presented. This contributed to our decision to push ahead with publication. It was not news that we were presenting, but reflections on the way that news interacts with wildlife, zoology and research scientists. Some of the papers also had extended question and answer sessions. These are also recorded here because of their relevance to the papers and because they show the responses that active minds have to provocative media stories. The order of papers retains the order of presentation on the day.

Zoology and the media is an exciting subject. It is populated by outgoing individuals who enjoy communicating and are keen on their subject matter. This vibrancy emerges from the papers and the audience participation. So, read on and enjoy what the participants in the forum enjoyed.

Contents

Daniel Lunney and Alison Matthews: *"Throw a koala on the barbie"* (Daily Telegraph *15 July 1997*)*: an analysis of wildlife reporting in two daily newspapers.*

Len Martin: *Observations on the transmission of bat diseases by the media.*

Bob Beale: *Attack of the killer rabbits: how the rabbit calicivirus story escaped.*

Michelle Christy: *Making headlines or saving a species.*

Paul Willis: *Crossing over: making the change from science to the media.*

Toss Gascoigne and Jenni Metcalfe: *TV talent: the good, the bad and the truly dreadful.*

Australian Zoologist **32**: 287, in the proceedings of the *Zoology and the Media* forum, edited by Daniel Lunney, Alison Matthews and Peter Wilson. *Australian Zoologist* Vol 32, No 2, 2003.